



GUEST COLUMN FROM SECRETARY HARSDORF: Visit a Wisconsin fair this summer

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MADISON – Below is a guest column from Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary Sheila Harsdorf:

In Wisconsin, the start of summer means the start of fair season, a time for your family and communities to come together to make memories. Across the state, communities will see fairgrounds come alive with the lights of Ferris wheels, smells of fair food, and sounds of livestock. As Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, I hope you and your family take time to make your way to at least one of the state's dozens of fairs.

Some fairs have been a community mainstay for 150 years or more, a tradition passed on for generations. This longtime tradition would not be possible without the community support and volunteer efforts of so many. Hundreds of volunteers help coordinate logistics and run events and judging competitions, while generous sponsors and local businesses provide displays as well as financial and product donations.

For young people participating in projects through 4-H, FFA, and other youth organizations, the reward goes far beyond a colored ribbon. Youth gain leadership and lifelong skills and friendships as they exhibit and compete in any of the numerous projects. Skills and talents learned at Wisconsin fairs help prepare young people for a successful career.

Fairs are also a wonderful opportunity to connect urban and rural interests. Fairgoers can experience agriculture up close and ask questions, whether it's about how livestock are cared for or how some of our favorite foods are grown. By offering fun and educational activities, agriculturalists are connecting with consumers to teach them about the source of their food, fuel, and fiber.

While agriculture is still the mainstay of our Wisconsin fairs, there is truly a project for everyone, whether living on a farm, in the city, or at a home in the country. Projects range from photography, rocketry, and computers, to clothing, livestock, and foods.

In addition, fairs give us all a chance to taste the finest of Wisconsin foods. Each fair is famous for their own sweet treat, from milk shakes to cream puffs, as well as the traditional corn dog or pork on a stick. With live musical treats and adventurous carnival rides, fairs offer low-cost entertainment for the entire family close to home.

The largest fair of them all is the Wisconsin State Fair, running from August 2nd to the 12th. One of the State Fair's biggest fans is Governor Walker. From taking a ride in Spin City to cheering on the bidders at the Governor's Blue Ribbon Livestock Auction, the Governor is a huge proponent of the value of fairs to our youth.

As an exhibitor and an attendee, fairs have always been a big part of my life. I encourage you to join in the fun by planning a trip this summer to one of Wisconsin's county and district fairs or the Wisconsin State Fair in West Allis. Find this summer fair's schedule at <https://www.wifairs.com/>.

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